

Message Text

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EXDIS, FOR AMBASSADOR TODMAN FROM ARA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL POLITICAL BACKGROUND ON BOLIVIA
POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: LA PAZ 2511

1. FOR YOUR REFERENCE, WE HAVE SUMMARIZED BELOW IN
SOME DETAIL OUR VIEWS OF THE STATE OF THE ART IN
BOLIVIAN POLITICS.

2. PEREDA AND HIS CAMPAIGN ADVISERS HAVE TRIED TO
DEVELOP SUPPORT FROM BOTH OF BOLIVIA'S POLITICAL PARTIES,
THE MNR AND THE FALANGISTAS (FSB). THE FSB INITIALLY
ASKED FOR VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION AND A REPORTED
40 PERCENT OF APPOINTMENTS IN A PEREDA ADMINISTRATION.
WHEN THIS OFFER WAS TURNED DOWN, FSB THEN NOMINATED ITS
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OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, LONG-TIME LEADER MARIO
GUTIERREZ. FSB MAY YET BE WILLING TO YIELD ITS CANDIDACY
AND SUPPORT PEREDA WITH A LOWER ASKING PRICE. ALSO, ONE
SMALL FACTION OF MNR HAD ALREADY DECLARED SUPPORT OF
PEREDA'S CANDIDACY, BUT THIS FACTION CANNOT DELIVER A
SIGNIFICANT VOTE.

3. THE TWO LARGER MNR Factions ARE GOING THEIR OWN WAYS.
MNR LEFTISTS ARE SUPPORTING EX-PRESIDENT HERNAN SILES
ZUAZO, WHO APPARENTLY HAS DECLARED FOR THE PRESIDENCY.
SILES ZUAZO ADDITIONALLY CAN COUNT ON COMMUNIST, SOCIALIST
AND OTHER LEFTIST BACKING. OTHER MNR VOTERS MIGHT WELL
FOLLOW LEAD OF EX-PRESIDENT VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO. HOW-
EVER, ALTHOUGH CONTACTS HAVE BEEN MADE BETWEEN PAZ AND
OTHER GROUPS (AND WITH GOB), PAZ HAS NOT YET DISCLOSED
HIS POSITION. (PAZ IS IN THE US, BUT REPORTEDLY MIGHT
RETURN TO BOLIVIA IN APRIL TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE
CAMPAIGN.)

4. BANZER CONFIDANT ALFREDO ARCE (HERE ON LEADER GRANT)
TOLD ARA/AND MARCH 27 THAT PEREDA'S CANDIDACY MUST GAIN
MAJOR SUPPORT FROM THE CITIES, AND DOES NOT NOW HAVE IT.
ARCE CLAIMS THAT A PEREDA VICTORY RIDING SOLELY ON
CAMPESINO VOTES WOULD BE A HOLLOW ONE AND WOULD UNDERMINE
THE LEGITIMACY AND STRENGTH OF A PEREDA ADMINISTRATION.
PEREDA HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH THE FSB AND PROBABLY
COULD ULTIMATELY GAIN THEIR SUPPORT. BUT THE FSB WHOSE
STRENGTH IS IN THE CITIES AMONG TEACHERS AND OTHER WHITE
COLLAR GROUPS, CANNOT DELIVER A HEAVY VOTE. THE MNR IS
SPLIT AT LEAST THREE WAYS AND PEREDA DESPERATELY NEEDS
SUPPORT, OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE, FROM PAZ ESTENSSORO
TO SUPPLEMENT HIS BACKING FROM THE ONE SMALL PRO-GOVERNMENT
MNR FACTION WHICH SUPPORTS HIM NOW. THE LEFT UNDER
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SILES ZUAZO WILL OPPOSE PEREDA ALL THE WAY. FINALLY, A
MINOR CANDIDACY WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT SUPPORT HAS BEEN
LAUNCHED BY A RETIRED GENERAL (BERNAL) WHICH MIGHT BLEED
OFF YET A FEW MORE MODERATE VOTERS -- AND PERHAPS MORE
SIGNIFICANTLY SOME OF THE MILITARY SUPPORT PEREDA MUST
COUNT UPON IN HIS INITIAL POWER BASE.

5. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE PEREDA CANDIDACY HAS MISFIREd
SO FAR BUT THAT HE COULD NONETHELESS WIN THE PRESIDENCY
RELYING ON THE CAMPESINO VOTE AND WHATEVER FSB OR MNR
SUPPORT HE CAN OBTAIN BETWEEN NOW AND THE JULY 9 ELECTION
DATE. BANZER, AS ARCE CONFIRMS, IS IN A TIGHT PLACE.
HE IS CONCERNED BY THE WEAKNESS OF THE PEREDA CANDIDACY
AND THE CONSEQUENT PROSPECTS FOR WEAK GOVERNMENT, BUT HE
IS ALSO QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT A VIRTUALLY CERTAIN LOSS
OF PRESTIGE IF HE STOPS DEMOCRATIZATION AFTER HAVING

EMBARKED BOLDLY ON IT.

6. IN ALL THIS BOLIVIA'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES,
INCLUDING OF COURSE THE SLIPPING TIN PRICES, ARE NOT
ABSENT. THEY POSE INCREASING THREATS TO BANZER AND

THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS. THE LEFT IN BFIDVIA HAS OF COURSE SEIZED UPON U.S. TIN SALES AS PROOF OF U.S. INSINCERITY AND WILLINGNESS TO TRIFLE WITH BOLIVIA'S LIFE BLOOD. SHOULD BANZER, BACKED BY FORCE OF ARMS, POSTPONE ELECTIONS AND EITHER STAY ON OR PUT IN A JUNTA, THE BOLIVIAN SITUATION WILL FESTER AT SOME COST IN VIOLENCE AND SUFFERING.

7. SEPTEL FOLLOWS ON POLICY ALTERNATIVES. COOPER

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